



My Next Steps:

Understanding VA Disability Ratings and Compensation



Question

What is a disability rating? How does this rating affect our family's disability compensation?



Answer

Disability compensation is a monthly, tax-free benefit payment from the federal government to veterans who are at least 10% disabled. The amount of compensation received is determined by your service member's disability rating as decided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. To receive disability compensation, your service member must submit a compensation claim to the VA and provide evidence to support any health issues included in the claim. A health assessment may also be required. If your service member is found to have a service-connected disability, meaning an illness or injury caused or worsened by duties performed during his or her time in the military, the VA will assign a disability rating that ranges from 0% to 100%.

Disability ratings are calculated according to the number and severity of health issues included in your service member's claim and are confirmed by the VA during the compensation claim process. If the VA determines that your service member has multiple disabilities, they use the Combined Ratings Table to calculate a disability rating. It is important to note that disability-rating percentages are not simply added together. For example, if your service member has one disability rated at 40%, a second disability rated at 20% and a third disability rated at 10%, the combined VA rating is 60% not 70%. The Combined Ratings Table found on the VA website can help you understand how a disability rating is calculated if your service member is determined to have more than one ratable health issue.

There are also several special compensation pay benefits authorized to service members with a disability rating. These can include combat- and operation-related special compensation and special compensation for severely disabled service members. Additionally, because your service member has a family, he or she may be eligible for extra compensation if the disability rating is 30% or higher.

“Disability ratings are calculated according to the number and severity of health issues included in your service member's claim and are confirmed by the VA during the compensation claim process.”

It is important to know that your service member's disability compensation may be offset if he or she also receives military retirement pay, disability severance pay or separation incentive payments. In other words, disability compensation may not result in an additional payment made to your service member. To learn more, visit the VA website's compensation rates page.

Depending on your service member's disability rating, he or she may be eligible for additional benefits, such as a

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Resources at a Glance

- [Locate](#) a transition assistance office
- Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum: [Veterans Benefits Briefings I and II](#)
- [VA Disability Compensation](#)
- [VA Disability Rating Benefits Matrix](#)



Answer (cont.)

federal veterans' hiring preference and VA health care. The VA has created an easy-to-use benefits eligibility tool to help you understand the veterans' benefits your family may be eligible to receive. To learn more, review the Service Connected Matrix on the VA website.

If you and your service member disagree with the VA's disability rating decision, you have the right to appeal that decision within one year of receiving the rating. To learn more, visit the Board of Veterans' Appeals website.

The disability compensation claim process is not a one-time opportunity. If a health condition arises or worsens later and you believe it is service-connected, your family may

benefit from contacting the VA for a reevaluation. Visit the VA website to learn how to navigate the new disability and increased disability claims processes. A representative from a veteran service organization or the VA can help.

To learn more about disability ratings and the disability compensation benefit, visit the VA website and review the MySTeP video, *Understanding the VA Disability Claim Process for Transitioning Military Families*. To ensure your service member receives all compensation allowed by law from the VA, seek the assistance of a veteran service officer or VA representative for help in preparing and filing a VA disability compensation claim.



Steps to Consider

These "Steps to Consider" are not meant as a checklist. Use the suggestions to facilitate a discussion with your service member.

- Review the MySTeP video, *Understanding the VA Disability Claim Process for Transitioning Military Families*, to learn about the VA's disability compensation benefit and how to apply.
- Contact your [local](#) TAP office, and request to attend the VA Benefits I and II briefings with your service member. If you are unable to attend the classroom briefings, view the [virtual curriculum](#) online.
- Understand your service member's transition circumstances. Retirement pay, disability severance pay and separation incentive payments may be offset by your service member's disability payment.
- Is your service member retiring? Has he or she served in a combat zone? Was he or she involved in combat operations? He or she may be eligible for [combat-related special pay](#).
- Would you like a representative to assist your family with the claims process? Learn how a veteran service organization or [VA representative](#) can help.
- Review the [VA Disability Rating Benefits Matrix](#) to understand all benefits afforded to your family due to your service member's disability rating.
- Understand your right to appeal the VA's disability rating decision. Review the resources on the [Board of Veterans' Appeals](#) website.
- Call the VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000, and speak to someone about the compensation claim process.



Resources

Installation Resources

Locate a transition assistance office: <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/>

- In the dropdown menu, choose "I'm looking for a program or service." Then, type in "Transition Assistance Program" in the "I'm choosing from" text field. Next, you'll be asked to filter by installation or zip code. After making your selection, select the "Search" button.

Virtual Resources

- Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) Virtual Curriculum: Review the Veterans Benefits Briefings I and II: https://www.dodtap.mil/core_curriculum.html



- VA Disability Compensation: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/types-disability.asp>
- VA Compensation Rates: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp>
- VA Combined Ratings Table: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp#combined>
- Department of Defense VA Disability Rating Benefits Matrix: https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/derivative_sc.asp

- Veterans Service Officer and VA Representatives: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vso/>
- VA Claims and Evidence- New Disability Claim: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/FDC/checklist.asp>
- Board of Veterans' Appeals: <https://www.bva.va.gov/index.asp>

- Combat Related Special Compensation: <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/disability/crsc.html>

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- Health Insurance Coverage Considerations for Transitioning Military Families